Because the New England Yearly Meeting was the first yearly meeting in the North American colonies, the most complete set of queries is that located in the *New England Advices Digest, 1780.* ¹ By examining the evolution of these queries or, as they were originally called, questions, the changing concerns of the Society of Friends are evident.

The queries of the other yearly meetings in the North American colonies were very similar to those in content and wording. ² Although their composition and intent remained similar for many years, the queries, like the Discipline, were revised when necessary. The changes introduced were usually a response to a particular situation or circumstance or reflected a change in the Society’s views on an issue. For instance, the payment of duties to the king in the eighth query of the 1762 Discipline was removed at the end of the American Revolution. Revisions that reflect a changed viewpoint on the part of the Society can be seen in the queries of the New York Yearly Meeting Discipline from 1810 to 1859. The 1810 query on the use of spirituous liquors and the “frequenting” of taverns read: “Do Friends avoid the unnecessary use of spirituous liquors, frequenting tavern, and attending places of diversion?” In 1836 it was revised to: “Do Friends avoid the use of distilled spirituous liquors, excepting for purposes strictly medicinal; and are they clear of frequenting taverns, and attending places of diversion?” ³ Moreover, the query on marriage which asked, “Do any keep company with persons not of our society on account of marriage;
do parents connive at their children’s keeping company with such; and do any attend the marriages of those who go out from us, or marriages accomplished by a priest?” was completely removed by 1859.

**Extracts of the Queries from the Digest of the New England Yearly Meeting**

1682

1 What Friends in the ministry in their respective counties departed this life since the last Yearly Meeting?
2 What Friends imprisoned for their Testimony, have died since last Yearly Meeting?
3 How the Truth has prospered amongst them since the last Yearly Meeting and how Friends are in Peace and Unity?

1696

1 What Sufferings?
2 What present prisoners?
3 How many discharged & when?
4 How many Died Prisoners & the time when?
5 How many Publick Friends died and when?
6 How many Meeting Houses built & what meetings added in each County since last year?
7 What signal judgements have come upon Persecutors?
8 How Truth Prospers, and Friends are in Unity in the Respective Counties?

1700

Added to the Eighth Query viz. How have the former advices of this meeting, relating to their Godly Care for the good Education of their Children in the way of Truth and plainness of Speech and Habit, been practiced?

1742

The Committee appointed to consider the Queries, instead of the Former Queries have drawn up the following: Which were here several
times read, duly considered, and agreed to. And 'tis agreed by this meeting, that the Several counties send up their answers to the said Queries to this meeting Separate from their accounts of Sufferings, which for the future are agreed [sic] to be taken immediately after the accounts of Sufferings are Entered.

1. What present Prisoners?
2. How many discharged since last year, when & how?
3. How many Died Prisoners?
4. How many Meeting Houses Built and what meetings New Settled?
5. How many publick Friends died & when?
6. What is the state of your meetings? Is there any Growth in the Truth? And doth any convincement appear since last year? And is Love & Unity preserved amongst you?
7. Is it your Care by Example and Precept to Train up your Children in all Godly Conversation and in the frequent Reading the Holy Scriptures as also in plainness of Speech, Behaviour & Apparel?
8. Do you bear a faithful and Christian Testimony against the Receiving or paying Tithes? And against bearing of Arms? And do you admonish Such as are unfaithful therein?
9. Do you stand clear in our Testimony against Defrauding the King of his Customs, Duties, or Excise, or in Dealing in Goods Suspected to be Run?
10. How are the Poor among you provided for? And what care is taken for the Education of their offspring?
11. Do you keep Record in your Monthly & Quarterly Meetings of the prosecutions and sufferings of your respective Members? And have you a Record for your Meeting Houses & Burial Grounds?

1760

At the Yearly Meeting held in Newport on Rhode Island, it was agreed and concluded that the following Queries should be here added and all the former Queries from London to the year 1742 be omitted in transcribing and these only to be in use among us.

1. Are all meetings for Religious Worship and Discipline duly attended, the Hour Observed, and are Friends preserved from Sleeping or any other Indecent behaviour therein particularly chewing Tobacco or taking snuff?
2 Is Love & Unity maintained among you as becomes Brethren, and are Talebearing, Backbiting and Evil Reports discouraged & where differences arise are Endeavours Speedily used to End them?

3 Are Parents of Children careful to bring them up in plainness of Speech, Behaviour and Apparel, and in the frequent Reading the holy Scriptures, to Restrain them from Reading pernicious Books and the Corrupt Conversation of the World?

4 Are Friends careful to avoid the frequent use of Spiritous Liquors, the unnecesary frequenting of Taverns and places of Publick Resort, and in all their conversation walk as becomes the professors of the Blessed Truth, in true moderation and Temperance on the account of Births, Marriages, Burials and all other Occasions?

5 Are poor Friends Necessities duly inspected they Relieved or assisted in such Business as they are capable of, do their children freely partake of Learning to fit them for Business, & are they & other Friends Children placed among Friends?

6 Do no young or unmarried persons make proposals of marriage with each other without consent of Parents & Relations concerned not keep company with those of other Societies on that account?

7 Do no Widowers or Widows make or admit of proposals of Marriage too Early after the Decease of former Husband or Wife, and are not the Rights of Children by former marriages neglected?

8 Do you maintain faithful Testimony against the Payment of Priests’ Wages, Bearing of Arms, Training or Military Service, and against Depriving the King of his Duties, or Buying or Vending of Goods Suspected to be Run?

9 Are Friends Careful to make their wills and settle their outward Estates whilst in Health, and take Friends advice therein when Necessary, and are Publick Gifts & Legacies applied to the uses intended by the Donors?

10 Are Friends clear of importing Negroes, or buying them when imported, and use those well where they are possessed by inheritance or otherwise, Endeavouring to Train them up in the Principles of Religion?

11 Are Friends Careful to live within the bounds of their circumstances and to avoid Launching into Trade and Business beyond their ability to manage and thereby break their promises and Neglect the payment of their just Debts and are such as give Reasonable Ground of Fear on these accounts Laboured with for their Recovery?
12 Are there any belonging to this meeting removed without a certificate, Or are there any come from other places appearing as Friends who have not produced certificates?

13 Are you concerned Regularly to deal with all Offenders in the Spirit of Meekness and Wisdom, without partiality or unnecessary delay, and where any continue obstinate to place Judgement upon them in the authority of Truth?

And it is further Recommended, That all Contention & Personal Reflection, and Smiting be kept out of our Meetings, That all Friends be careful to keep out of the Heats and Passions & Doubtful disputation and that we suffer no Turbulent, contentious persons amongst us in ordering or managing the affairs of Truth, but that the same be managed in the peaceable Spirit and Wisdom of Jesus with Decency, Forbearance, and Love to each other.